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ABSTRACT

This document reports an evaluation of the orientation program in Australia for hosted Year Program students. Qualitative and quantitative data were used in the evaluation. The techniques included on-site observation of the orientation and interviews with 141 participants and 23 staff members from 12 countries. Although no written goals were stated for the program, several goals emerged from evaluator interviews including: (1) breathing space; (2) language learning; and (3) specific cultural learning. The orientation program included skits, workshops, language practice, field trips, information sessions, and an international dinner. A pre-departure orientation was conducted for students returning home and an evaluation questionnaire listing 10 goals to be rated was administered. Three of the goals were rated highly necessary for future programs. They included: (1) specific cultural learning; (2) strategies for coping and developing realistic expectations; and (3) the formation of international friendships. The results showed that the major problem for the students was their relationships with the host family. Fifty percent of the students rated the year as happy and productive; 40 percent had some difficulties but still had a productive year, and 10 percent had a continuously difficult and unhappy year. The departing orientation was perceived as useful for sharing mutual experiences for coping with problems and for renewing friendships with other students. The report concluded that the orientation camp does achieve some of the purposes expected of it by each of the groups. Two afterwords are presented: (1) "Australia's Orientation and the Montreal Recommendations" (Mary Ann Zaremba); and (2) "How National Units Can Make Use of This Report" (Neal Grove). (NL)

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RESEARCH REPORTS

DECEMBER 1985

DETERMINING THE WORTH OF AN ORIENTATION: FINDINGS FROM AFS/AUSTRALIA

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RESEARCH REPORT **31**

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The Research Department. AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.

The mission of the AFS Research Department is to . . .

- carry out research and evaluation projects that potentially will lead to increased understanding of the nature and impact of AFS exchanges, to improved implementation of AFS programs and operations, and/or to enhanced intercultural learning by AFS participants;

- collect and develop innovative cross-cultural orientation materials and procedures that potentially will improve the quality of the learning experience associated with participation in an AFS program;

- maintain contact with members of the scholarly, educational, and professional communities around the world who are interested in international and intercultural exchange of persons; and

- serve as a consultant to members of the worldwide AFS community with respect to research and evaluation, orientation and training, and other activities as may be appropriate.

D E T E R M I N I N G T H E W O R T H O F

A N O R I E N T A T I O N :

F I N D I N G S F R O M A F S / A U S T R A L I A

BY DR. JENNIFER NOESJIRWAN
Independent consultant, Sydney, Australia

December 1985

Editor's Introduction: In October of 1982, the Research Department of AFS International, in cooperation with AFS/Australia, commissioned Dr. Jennifer Noesjirwan to conduct a naturalistic evaluation of the orientation program offered by AFS/Australia for hosted Year Program students. The resulting "Orientation Evaluation Project" was carried out during the 1983 hosting year, which in Australia begins during January. Dr. Noesjirwan's final report contains over 400 pages of detailed description and analysis. **Determining the Worth of an Orientation: Findings from AFS/Australia** condenses her findings. The full report may be examined in the Research Department at AFS International headquarters in New York, or in the offices of AFS/Australia in Sydney. Bound copies of the full report may be purchased for Aus$10.00 from AFS/Australia, Lisgar House, 30 Carrington Street, Sydney, N.S.W. 2000, Australia.

Additional copies of this AFS Research Report may be obtained from the AFS Research Department without charge. Two additional sections that have been excerpted from Dr. Noesjirwan's full report also may be obtained from the AFS Research Department without charge: They are Appendix One, entitled **Details of the Students' Experiences**, and Appendix Two, entitled **Assessments of the Programme's Merit.**

The Research Department commends Dr. Noesjirwan's work to staff and volunteers throughout the AFS world who design and deliver orientation programs for hosted participants, and to anyone anywhere who would achieve a fuller understanding of the nature and ultimate **worth** of an orientation program carried out by host country personnel.

Worth, an extrinsic property of the [entity being evaluated], is determined by comparing the entity's impact or outcomes to some set of external requirements; for example, the results of a needs assessment or a context evaluation. Here, the entity's benefits are assessed by reference to a set of criteria. These criteria are not drawn from a professional group or a group of experts but from the variety of local stakeholders groups that are related to or affected by the entity. Criteria of worth are highly variable and depend on **which** group in **which** context is being assessed.

Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, **Effective Evaluation: Inproving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results Through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches.** San Francisco and London: Jossey-Bass, 1981. pp. 45-46.

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DETERMINING THE WORTH OF AN ORIENTATION:

FINDINGS FROM AFS/AUSTRALIA

by Dr. Jennifer Noesjirwan

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Introduction

The principal objective of the AFS Orientation Evaluation Project was to achieve a comprehensive, qualitative, emphathetic understanding of the orientation programme for hosted students in one AFS country, Australia. The Orientation Evaluation Project was a naturalistic study that made use of such techniques as observation, interviews, document reviews, and other qualitative evaluation methods in gathering information. The information gathering task was approached from an open-ended (or goal-free) perspective in order to insure that unintended outcomes of the orientation programme would be discovered.

All individuals or groups involved in or affected by the orientation programme for hosted students are considered **"stakeholders"** in the programme. The purpose and value of the orientation programme was assumed to vary for different stakeholders. The principal stakeholders contacted during this evaluation were: 1) the hosted students, 2) those who developed the orientation activities, 3) professional AFS staff members in Australia, and 4) key AFS volunteers in Australia. Other stakeholders included host family members, AFS volunteers in the host communities, school personnel in the schools hosting AFS students, AFS people in the sending countries, natural parents of the AFS students, and the AFS International administration. The perspectives of all principal stakeholders were taken into account in this evaluation; the perspectives of other stakeholders (especially host family members) also were taken into account whenever possible.

The AFS Orientation Camp

The AFS Orientation Camp took place at a youth centre located on spacious grounds in a bush setting near Sydney. A total of 141 students and 23 staff members participated in the orientation camp. Table 1 shows the number of students participating from each country.

Table 1. Number of students from each sending country (Reading across rows: in order of arrival).

Hong Kong	4	Sri Lanka	10	Japan	29
Malaysia	7	Indonesia	12	West Germany	8
Switzerland	3	Denmark	5	U.S.A.	55
Canada (French)	3	New Zealand	3	Finland	2

The principal objective of the AFS Orientation Evaluation Project is to achieve a comprehensive, qualitative, emphathetic understanding of the during-the-experience phase of the orientation programme for hosted students.

The Orientation Camp lasted nine days, preceeded by a one-day staff orientation session. The arrivals of the hosted students were staggered throughout the first week of the orientation camp, so that some students (primarily Asian students) had a full nine days of the camp while others (largely the U.S. students) had only three days.

The volunteers who composed the camp staff included Lorna Clayton (the director of the orientation camp), regional hosting coordinators from each Australian state, a group of young returnees, a camp "mum" and "dad," a student in communications, a counsellor, an ESL specialist, and the author of this report. Other camp visitors included a former AFS student from Japan and an Indonesian resident in Sydney, both of whom held special sessions for the incoming students from their respective countries.

At the staff orientation day, Lorna talked briefly about the purpose of the camp for her. She wished the students to be able to rest, to be themselves, to come to understand that one's perspective can change, to accept difference without judgement. She emphasized that the volunteers would be playing by ear for much of the time -- choosing the moment carefully to introduce each new idea. As a result, the staff would need to meet at least daily to be able to plan the upcoming events.

At the staff orientation, the E.S.L. specialist gave some initial pointers to the staff: for example, use direct and simple sentence structures, avoid the use of conditional, avoid colloquialisms. Once the students arrived, the E.S.L. specialist sought out students who seemed to need special help in English. These students were grouped together for special instruction in English.

Lorna Clayton talked briefly about the purpose of the camp for her. She wished the students to be able to rest, to be themselves, to come to understand that one's perspective can change, to accept difference without judgement.

Several types of orientation activities took place during the nine-day camp. It is only possible to highlight some of these.

Direct instruction. Immediately upon arrival, staff members showed the students in some of the Asian groups how to make their beds and how to use Australian bathroom facilities. Girls and boys were separated for this instruction. Staff members spoke simply and directly and demonstrated how to sit on the toilet, use toilet paper, turn on the hot tap, and so forth. For the students much of this seemed new and they listened attentively.

Staff skits. The staff gave skits for the students as a means of communicating important information about Australian home life. One particular skit showed the importance of bathing and wearing clean clothes. This skit came about because of concern expressed by the staff about the high body odour of some of the students.

Workshops. Staff members worked in pairs with small groups of students for workshop activities. These included a session in which students were asked to draw something to show how they felt at that time and then to explain it to the group, and a session called "pillow talk" in which students used a pillow to introduce themselves and to highlight their positive personal qualities. The pillow represents the self, and each participant in turn holds the pillow and talks to the pillow as "my best friend."

Language recitation. The E.S.L. instructor conducted a five-minute language exercise each day that involved the whole group in mass recitation: "It's a nice day isn't it?" "Yes, it is." "You've cut your hair, haven't you?" "Yes, I have."

Physical contact games. One staff member organised group games on the oval at the camp. These games included such things as 50 people holding hands and twisting themselves into a tight spiral and then whipping the line around in the reverse direction.

Field trips. Staff members took students into Syndey for shopping and sightseeing. Daily morning excursions to the beach also took place with about half-a-dozen students going each day.

International dinner. One evening an international dinner was planned. Students from each country cooked dishes from their home country and, if possible, dressed in native costume. The camp staff did their best to locate the ingredients necessary for the various dishes and to assist the planning of the event in any way possible. Concerts by students from three of the countries also were held.

Information sessions for specific country groups. The Japanese and the Indonesian students each had special sessions led by an adult from their home country who was currently living in Australia. These were conducted in the students' native language, and contained specific information about life in Australia.

Boy- and girl-talk. The young returnees organised a session for boys and a session for girls to address such topics as dating, social life, sexuality, etc. The girl-talk session did not go well. The

staff leading the session tended to speak quickly and use complicated syntax. Much of the time they were talking from the perspective of worldly-wise women. The Asian girls in particular appeared frightened and bewildered. They did not have the Australian concept of individual choice, nor of their own right to say no. Thus "smoking is very common in Australia" was interpreted as "I will be asked to smoke and I cannot refuse." Similarly "Girls sometimes have sex" became "I will be expected to have sex." The staff realized that something was wrong with this session, and together tried to work out a solution. Later on, a special session was organised for the Asian girls to alleviate some of the confusion that had been brought on by the earlier session. The boy-talk session did not seem to be plagued by the same problems.

The staff realized that something was wrong with the girl-talk session, and together tried to work out a solution. Later on, a special session was organised for the Asian girls to alleviate some of the confusion that had been brought on by the earlier session.

Most of the students at the camp in the first few days were Asians. However, there were some German and some Swiss students, all of whom seemed a bit uncomfortable to find themselves in the minority. The camp staff had difficulty getting these European students to speak in English; they preferred to use their last opportunities to speak to each other in German and seemed to resent the requests of the camp staff that they abandon their native language.

With the arrival of the U.S. contingent, the atmosphere of the camp changed noticeably. Some students expressed disappointment that the small intimate group had been changed with the arrival of so many Americans. The students who had arrived earlier seemed to feel a bit overwhelmed by the arrival of so many students who already spoke the language. The students from the U.S., on the other hand, appeared especially tired after their long flight; many of them had complaints either about the orientation they had completed before leaving the U.S. or about the conditions at the bush camp.

On the final day of the orientation camp, the students were put into groups according to the region of Australia where they would be hosted. Regional hosting co-ordinators presented the onward travel arrangements, answered questions (from a "question box" where students were able to pose their questions anonymously) about Australia and the various communities in which the students would be hosted, and responded to students' comments about the orientation. At about 4 o'clock that afternoon, the students left in buses for their host communities, or in cars with their host families in the case of those who would be hosted in the Sydney area. For several, leaving the camp was an emotional and tearful experience.

> **Most of the students at the camp in the first few days were Asians. With the arrival of the U.S. contingent, the atmosphere of the camp changed noticeably.**

Follow-Up Orientations

All incoming Year Programme students experience the orientation camp described above, though occasionally of group of students arrives late, thus missing the main orientation period. In that case a smaller orientation programme is provided by AFS/Australia on the same lines as the main camp. This happened in 1983 to the Thai students and those from South America, Kenya, Austria, Greece, and Spain (a total of 20 students).

After the initial orientation camp, all students were dispersed to the eight regions across Australia. The students did not come together again on a national basis until the end-of-stay camp held immediately prior to departing. AFS/Australia takes no responsibility for orientation on an ongoing basis. Each region and chapter develops its own programme for the students during the year. Some regions provide some form of follow-up orientation; others do not. There is no national co-ordination of regional events or orientation programmes. The national office does not advise the regions on appropriate programmes, nor is it informed when such programmes occur. Each region operates separately.

The following section describes orientation events in each of the eight hosting regions. Monthly chapter meetings, special chapter social events, and individual or group counselling sessions have not been included, since there have been several hundred such events and it is not possible to document them accurately.

New South Wales. Some 47 students were hosted in New South Wales, with an additional four students in the Australian Capitol Territory (Canberra). Several events were provided for these students during the year; only one of these, the N.S.W. Country Weekend, held April 29 to May 1, was clearly an orientation event.

> **After the initial orientation camp, all students were dispersed to the eight regions across Australia. The students did not come together again on a national basis until the end-of-stay camp held immediately prior to departing.**

The Country Weekend was held at a recreation centre about five hours' drive from Sydney. All Year Programme students were encouraged

to attend. Also invited were host families, returnees, chapter hosting co-ordinators, and interested chapter members. Some 150 people attended, including about 40 of the 51 Year Programme students. The programme for the weekend was fairly informal and relaxed. For much of the time students were free to entertain themselves. Counselling took place on an informal basis throughout the weekend. However, there were some scheduled events.

1) Discussion groups for students (one for English speaking, one for non-English speaking students) to talk over their experiences.

2) An open forum for host families (and others) to discuss the hosting experience.

3) Saturday evening entertainment.

Those students who attended the Country Weekend felt that it was very valuable. Several commented later that the weekend broke down the sense of isolation they had been experiencing. It was reassuring to meet some of the orientation camp staff again, and to renew or extend friendships with other students. It was particularly important to be able to share experiences with other students, to discover that others were having similar problems, and to share suggestions for coping.

Queensland. Queensland comprises two separate AFS regions: North Queensland and South Queensland. North Queensland encompasses a huge area with a comparatively sparse population. During 1983 there were seven Year Programme students hosted there. No formal orientation programme was organised for these students, though most were able to take part in AFS social events and individual counselling.

South Queensland hosted 28 Year Programme students. There were no formal orientation events provided on a regional basis, but there were two other events that brought together all the students from the region. Both these events contained some discussion or informal sharing of problems. In addition, some students were involved in chapter events.

Victoria. During 1983, 33 year programme students were hosted in Victoria. Two orientation events were organised on a regional basis: An orientation day on March 19 and a combined event in June with mid-year orientation for the hosted students and pre-departure orientation for Australian students going abroad.

Orientation day was held at the home of the regional hosting co-ordinator and was staffed by her, the regional counselling co-ordinator, and two returnees. The purposes stated by those organising the day were: 1) to monitor how things were going for the students, 2) to provide counselling support for the chapters, 3) to provide an opportunity for students to meet each other, and 4) to provide ongoing orientation and cultural learning. Nearly all hosted

students attended; host families were not included. The main activities of the day included a group discussion in the morning and a staff role-play depicting host families in the afternoon, followed by discussion. Students appeared to benefit from the day. This event was especially important for those hosted in rural areas who had little contact with other AFS students.

The second event, in June, was primarily organised for Australian students about to go overseas. Year Programme students were invited to take part in this pre-departure orientation. Students were asked to give information about their own countries to the departing students. During the afternoon, discussion groups were held separately for hosted and pre-departure students. Most of those discussions centered on school, friendship groups, and associated problems. Apart from these major events, there were a series of smaller events involving one or two chapters.

Tasmania. In 1983, Tasmania hosted ten students. The main follow-up orientation event in this region was the "reflective weekend" held April 29 to May 1. The purposes of the weekend were: 1) to get to know one another and welcome the Thai student (who had not been present at the main orientation camp); 2) to discuss the first three months and some of the difficulties experienced, and to plan ahead (building on the initial orientation); and 3) to discuss the Sydney orientation and the benefits derived from it.

All ten Year Programme students attended, as did five Australian returnees. Chapter members were involved in some activities, but the programme was not directed at host families. The programme included a mixture of structured and unstructured learning as well as recreational activities, including visits to a local landmark, a picnic, and wide-ranging, relatively unstructured discussion sessions. The regional hosting co-ordinator commented:

> I consider this weekend vital. As well as their general discussion, several students had private talks with me about things that worried them. Certainly their personal friendships blossomed. Ideally this should happen at least once more during the year, but [it's] difficult to get them all together once they are into their own activities. Of course the weekend greatly enhanced the relationship between me and the students as well.

South Australia. South Australia hosted 24 students on the Year Programme. There was one regional event that was considered an orientation: the "roundup" weekend, held June 23-26. It was for all Year Programme and Short Programme students. Host families and chapter members were included in some activities, but the programme was largely intended for the students. The purposes of the event were: 1) to enable the students to get together socially and discuss their varying experiences, and 2) to foster AFS in the area and provide a fund-raising occasion.

The Roundup began with one large discussion group. The students were given the following goals for that discussion and for the weekend as a whole.

1) to step back and look at your AFS experience from a distance.

2) to better understand your experience by listening to the experience of others.

3) to gain a greater understanding of others and why they do what they do and think what they think.

4) to share with others the way you feel.

5) to gain a better understanding of what the AFS experience entails by stepping away from it.

6) to get to know other people socially and feel more a part of AFS.

During and after the discussion, students could approach the group leaders privately for individual counselling. The rest of the weekend was devoted to structured activities, such as visiting and speaking to primary school students, attending a basketball game, and a barbeque lunch with host families and chapter members. The roundup was successful from the chapter's point of view. Students appeared to enjoy themselves, although there was some tension between the U.S. students who wanted a special party of Americans only, and the other (Asian) students. Various chapters in South Australia sponsored other events throughout the year.

Western Australia. Western Australia hosted nine Year Programme students during 1983. The main follow-up orientation event in the region was a weekend held at the end of March. This weekend took place some 60 kilometres north of Perth at a holiday resort. The weekend was organised by returnees for the students. Others were not involved. It was mainly a fun weekend with swimming, sports, etc. During Saturday afternoon the regional co-ordinator spoke to the students. Some students talked over their problems with the returnees, but mainly they shared their problems with each other. Most problems revolved around relations with the host families. One immediate practical outcome of these discussions was that at least four students subsequently sought and obtained a change of families.

The other major regional event in Western Australia was a 16-day bus trip in July through the Pilbarra (outback region to the north of the state). Students were billeted in various country towns and had a taste of outback life. While the students were away, the hosting co-ordinator held a meeting with host families to discuss problems they were having with the hosting experience.

One immediate practical outcome of these discussions was that at least four students subsequently sought and obtained a change of families.

Northern Territory. Only one student was hosted in the Northern Territory. This student did not receive any specific follow-up orientation.

The End-of-Stay Camp

The end-of-stay camp was a national event, provided by AFS/Australia for all Year Programme students. It was held in the Snowy Mountains of N.S.W. in a resort area. All students and staff were housed in a motel complex overlooking Lake Jindabyne. At the end of the camp most students were taken directly to the airport, by bus, for their return home.

Students arrived at various times throughout the first day of the end-of-stay camp, so no structured activities were planned for that day. On the following day, students completed an end-of-stay questionnaire designed by me for use in this Orientation Evaluation Project. The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold: 1) to provide feedback about the year's experience for use by AFS staff in revising programmes for the future, and 2) to provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their experience and to raise any "unfinished business" for discussion.

Other structured activities included a role-play session in small groups designed to prepare students for the reactions of their natural families upon their return home, a discussion session focused on "tips on coping" -- meeting the challenge of integrating what they had learnt abroad into their new life at home, and a final presentation explaining the AFS experience with diagrams and discussion. Students were also given free time and recreational activities during the end-of-stay camp.

The importance of the end-of-stay camp is summed up in the comments of one volunteer staff member and returnee.

> During group and private discussions with many of the students, I found that they were mostly excited yet worried about going home. They all seemed to appreciate the need for the end-of-stay and apart from anything they gained from the sessions, they wanted (and needed) that time with each other again to renew friendships, compare notes, and put their year into perspective before going home. Each had realised the changes that had occurred in them during the year, so fitting back in with the family and friends was the major concern.

A Preliminary Analysis

There is considerable confusion as to what makes an event an orientation. In one sense, any event can be a learning experience for participants. If orientation refers to all cultural learning experiences in the new culture, then all events can be classed as orientation. On the other hand, very few events are specifically designed for the purpose of providing an orientation programme, dealing with the problems students are facing, and suggesting effective strategies for dealing with those problems. Most of the events planned by APS at the local or regional level have many purposes, including such things as fund-raising and promoting APS as well as providing opportunities for student learning.

Of the seven hosting regions, only three provided events that were explicitly designed as an "orientation" for students. All of these events were held in March and April. Other regions included a discussion session for students as one item in a weekend programme. It is not clear why regions did not put more energy into orientation, but several reasons were suggested.

1) Regional personnel felt they lacked the resources of time, money, skills.

2) Informal, unstructured events were seen as providing a more appropriate base for dealing with problems.

3) Orientation was considered unnecessary.

There is considerable confusion as to what makes an event an orientation. Of the seven hosting regions, only three provided events that were explicitly designed as an "orientation" for students.

While some effort was made to provide for the needs of hosted students, less attention was paid to the needs of host families. Very few events catered for both students and hosts in an integrated way, except the occasional barbeque or formal social event. However, in New South Wales the Country Weekend included both host parents and students, and provided both with opportunity for discussion, while in Western Australia an opportunity was provided for host families to talk over their problems while the students were away. No other region appears to have provided any orientation for host families other than whatever was done at the time they were selected and in the course of chapter activities prior to the students' arrival.

Most students stated that they had received no follow-up orientation. Even those who clearly had attended a follow-up orientation were likely to say they had not.

At the end-of-stay camp, all students were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked, among other things, what follow-up orientation they received. Most students (93 out of 133) stated that they had received no follow-up orientation. This pattern held for English-speaking as well as non-English-speaking students, and for all regions (except, perhaps, Tasmania). Even those hosted in New South Wales and Victoria who clearly had attended a follow-up orientation were likely to say they had not. Most students apparently defined regional events more as social events than as orientation. Those who did claim to have attended a follow-up orientation found its principal benefit to be a means of getting together with other students.

The end-of-stay camp itself was a national event, and was an important experience for all students. The camp provided an opportunity for students to rest and have fun, to share their year's experiences, and to prepare for their re-entry into their home culture. The structured programme was largely directed at this last task; the end-of-stay camp was primarily an orientation for re-entry into the home culture rather than an orientation to the Australian experience.

The orientation camp held nationally in January remains the most significant orientation event for nearly all students.

The overall conclusion must be that, while particular regional or chapter events during the year provided significant learning opportunities for some students, there was no consistent pattern of orientation programmes provided for all, or even most, students, and almost none for host families. The orientation camp held nationally in January remains the most significant orientation event for nearly all students.

The Goals of Orientation

Ultimately, any evaluation seeks to estimate the effectiveness of the programme under examination. Effectiveness can only be judged in terms of the aims of the programme. To what extent has the programme achieved what it set out to achieve?

There is no clear written statement of aims for the AFS Australian orientation programme. In most discussions of orientation, the aims remain implicit. The assumption seems to be that the aim or aims are obvious, and that everyone understands and agrees with those aims. On closer examination, these assumptions collapse. The orientation programme is designed to meet many aims. The various stakeholding groups within AFS Australia each view the orientation from different perspectives and hold somewhat differing sets of aims. There is considerable disagreement as to which goals are important, and what exactly the orientation programme should be trying to achieve.

In most discussions of orientation, the aims remain implicit. The assumption seems to be that the aim or aims are obvious, and that everyone understands and agrees with those aims. On closer examination, these assumptions collapse.

In the course of questionning the various stakeholders about the aims of orientation, I received hundreds of statements of goals. These statements fall into several broad categories, which are summarized below. The categories adopted are not mutually exclusive; they nonetheless provide useful distinctions.

Goal One: Breathing Space. The orientation should provide a space between the old culture/family and the new one. It should provide an opportunity for the students to rest after the traumas of leaving, to have fun, to adapt themselves to the fact that they are about to enter a new world.

Goal Two: Language Learning. The orientation should assist students in the learning of Australian English. This goal is assumed in the title "language camp" and is particularly important for those being introduced to English for the first time. It is also important to introduce native English speakers to the idiomatic use of Australian English.

Goal Three: Specific Cultural Learning. The orientation should introduce the students to Australian culture, especially to the nature of Australian families and schools. It is hoped that students will learn something of Australian values as well as practical information on Australian customs and rules relating to bathing, eating, sleeping, working, dating, etc. It is not expected that students will learn everything about the Australian culture, but that they will learn enough to enable them to begin operating within it. The aspects that should be stressed are those that tend to be most different from the student's home culture, and that are likely to cause the most difficulty.

There is considerable disagreement as to which goals are important, and what exactly the orientation programme should be trying to achieve.

Goal Four: Personal Growth. The orientation programme should encourage the students to develop a firm sense of their own identity, a confidence in their ability to face future challenges, increased flexibility and tolerance, a preparedness for learning, change, and growth.

Goal Five: Strategies for Coping/Developing Realistic Expectations. These are sometimes seen as two separate goals, sometimes as parts of the same. The orientation should correct whatever unrealistic expectations the students may have and forewarn them about what is likely to happen and about what others are likely to expect of them. The orientation also should attempt to prepare students for some of the difficulties ahead, offering advice on how to cope with those difficulities when they do arise.

Goal Six: Student Responsibilities. The orientation should impress upon students the extent of their responsibilities to AFS. While Goal Five was concerned with helping the student get as much out of the experience as possible, Goal Six is concerned with helping people in the receiving culture -- host family, host school, host chapter -- get as much out of the experience as possible. Those involved in hosting will find the experience worthwhile and rewarding if, and only if, the students fill "their part of the bargain." The aim of orientation is ensure that students understand what their part of the bargain entails.

Goal Seven: Developing a Support Network. The orientation should provide the basis for continuing support for students throughout the year. A strong support network may help the students gain the necessary confidence to venture forth; it may provide them with an important coping resource when difficulties arise. Students should be made familiar with AFS as an organisation, with the regional volunteer staff, and with other AFS students, all of whom can provide support. AFS staff (paid and volunteer) on site at the orientation should be able to identify individual students who are likely to have difficulty so that their situations can be monitored carefully throughout the year.

Goal Eight: Meeting Other Students. The orientation should bring students of many cultures together to share a common experience. It is expected that students will form strong international bonds of friendship during the orientation event. Through this experience they should participate in the meaning of the AFS ideal: "Walk Together, Talk Together."

Goal Nine: General Cultural Learning. In learning about Australian culture and the other cultures represented at the language camp, students should reflect on their own culture and see it from a new perspective. Out of this experience should emerge a new awareness of the nature of culture and of cultural differences. Orientation should provide a base for broader learning about culture and an awareness of the narrow constraints of one's own culture.

Goal Ten: Staff Development. The primary purpose of orientation is to facilitate the students' learning. A secondary purpose is to facilitate the learning of AFS's volunteer staff. The orientation should offer an enrichment programme for hosting volunteers by porviding opportunities for cultural learning and thereby increasing the intercultural sensitivity and understanding that volunteers bring to hosting. This staff development should directly and indirectly assist students and host families in having a more satisfying homestay.

Conflicting Priorities Regarding Orientation Goals

As mentioned previously, different stakeholders have different priorities for orientation. Only two goals are held strongly and in common by all stakeholding groups. The other eight are held strongly by a few stakeholding groups but seldom mentioned by others.

Goal One: Breathing Space. This is mentioned by some members of each stakeholding group. It was mentioned most often by U.S. students and by orientation camp staff. In no case was it seen as paramount.

Goal Two: Language Learning. This was not regarded as paramount by any group. It was quite often mentioned by Asian and European students, area co-ordinators, regional chairpersons, and camp staff.

Goal Three: Specific Cultural Learning. This was regarded as important by all groups. It was the goal most frequently mentioned by U.S. students and by area co-ordinators.

Goal Four: Personal Growth. This was not mentioned by host parents and rarely by other groups, though it may be implied in other statements. Personal Growth was most often mentioned by camp staff. It was foremost in Lorna Clayton's thinking.

Goal Five: Strategies for Coping/Developing Realistic Expectations. This was mentioned frequently by all groups. It was the most frequently mentioned goal by returnee camp staff.

Goal Six: Student Responsibilities. This was not mentioned at all by students, returnees, or other camp staff. It was very heavily emphasized by host parents and by area co-ordinators. Of those concerned with designing and running the orientation camp, only the regional hosting co-ordinators mentioned the importance of this goal.

Goal Seven: Developing a Support Network. This goal was not frequently mentioned by students or host parents. It was quite often mentioned by all groups who work at the regional and national level.

Goal Eight: Meeting Other Students. The goal of forming international friendships was paramount to students, particularly to students from Asia and Europe. It was also frequently mentioned by camp staff. It was not mentioned at all by host parents or area co-ordinators.

Goal Nine: General Cultural Learning. This was not mentioned by students or host parents. It was sometimes viewed by other groups as a kind of higher order goal, something that arises from the achievement of other goals.

Goal Ten: Staff Development. Very few people mentioned this goal. It was sometimes mentioned by volunteers working at the national level, and by camp staff. Its importance was seen by many as a fortuitous outcome of the camp rather than as a paramount purpose.

I have heard people seriously question whether any orientation should occur.

It is very clear that there is no single or simple purpose to the orientation programme in Australia. The goals are many and complex. Not all are ordinarily stated explicitly. Perhaps most significantly, stakeholders do not agree on what should be the paramount purpose of orientation.

There seem to be at least three quite different and sometimes conflicting views. Those working at the regional and national level, including camp staff, seem primarily concerned to assist the student, to prepare the him or her to face the trials to come, and to provide an ongoing support resource for those who need it. This pre-occupation is regarded with some suspicion and occasional hostitily by other stakeholding groups, particularly host parents and those working at the chapter level. These groups see the importance of orientation as impressing on the students their responsibilities, teaching them to give as well as take. I have heard people in these groups seriously question whether any orientation should occur. To some, orientation seems to devalue their own role, diminishing their control over the student. Their suspicion is perhaps aggravated by the fact that students appear eager to value orientation so highly.

For the students, orientation is, above all else, an occasion for forming international friendships, a time when they can grasp a vision of the ideal of AFS.

For the students, orientation is, above all else, an occasion for forming international friendships, a time when they can grasp a vision of the ideal of AFS. Perhaps those at chapter level are responding to a sense of loss; they must cope with the realities of exchange and miss the magic of this vision.

The Characteristics of the Students' Experiences

Another way to evaluate the orientation programme is to examine the success of the students during their sojourn. We are concerned to measure what effects, if any, the orientation programme has on the subsequent adjustment of the students. What is the total sojourn experience of the students? Do most students make a successful adjustment in Australia? What is the success rate? How is "success" to be defined? What are the most common problems?

These are extraordinarily difficult questions to answer. Some of the most obvious difficulties are the following.

1) Students are spread across the whole of Australia. "Adjustment" and "counselling" are local, chapter matters. There is no practical way of compiling information at a national level.

2) Adjustment difficulties will not necessarily be known even at the local level. Sometimes problems are kept within the host family.

3) What is regarded as an insurmountable problem by one student will be a challenge to another. What is seem as a problem by the student may not be regarded as a problem by the family or chapter, and vice-versa.

4) Problems, when they do become known, are widely discussed within AFS networks. They become particularly visible. This makes it more difficult to assess the size of the "silent majority" of students who go unnoticed simply because they have no known problems.

5) There are many differing criteria of success. A homestay might be deemed successful: a) because the student stuck it out for a full year in one family, b) because the family enjoyed the experience, c) because the student enjoyed the experience, d) because problems were faced and overcome, e) because the student experienced considerable personal growth, or f) because considerable cultural learning took place. Many placements would be deemed successful by some of these criteria but unsuccessful by others.

Statistics provide a partial picture. In 1983, 163 students from 18 countries were hosted on the year programme in Australia. Of these, 45 (or 28%) were known to change families at least once. There were four early returns. (Causes for these early returns were pregnancy, drug use, driving, and non-adjustment.)

I have tried to make an overall, wholistic, intuitive judgement of the success rate of student adjustment. My best jugdement would be as follows.

1) About 50% of students enjoyed a happy, productive year, with realtively minor difficulties that were overcome.

2) About 40% of students experienced some difficulty, but still had a productive year, one well worthwhile in terms of their own personal growth.

3) About 10% of students had a continuously difficult, unhappy year (though they also may have gained much).

This judgement can be checked against the judgement of AFS regional staff, each of whom has a more detailed knowledge of the students in his or her own region, and each of whom was asked to make a similar assessment. Below are reported the assessments of the regional hosting co-ordinators or other volunteers in the principal regions.

Table 2: Assessment of student experiences by regional hosting co-ordinators.

	happy, productive year	some difficulty	continuously difficult
Tasmania	80%	20%	0%
Victoria	50%	45%	5%
Queensland	20%	70%	10%
South Australia	75%	20%	5%
New South Wales	40%	50%	10%

Not everyone who was asked to make this assessment was able to use these categories comfortably. For example, the South Queensland hosting co-ordinator felt that all 29 of their students had some difficulty but all were "leaning towards the first category" of a happy productive year. Similarly, four other staff members in the N.S.W. region argued that all students belong in the second category (i.e., with some difficulty, but still a productive year) though some

students (maybe 10%) had fewer and some (maybe 8%) had more difficulties than others.

Specific Problems Encountered by Students

Apart from an estimate of the overall success rate, it was important to get some idea of the kinds of difficulty commonly faced. What problems recurr most often? At the very broadest level of generalization, virtually all problems that I encountered could be placed in one (or more) of the following categories:

1) difficulty in understanding and expressing oneself in English

2) cultural differences leading to misunderstanding, confusion, disapproval

3) poor communication between some or all actors, that is, poor listening, lack of empathy, lack of open communication

4) conflict of wills between young adolescents developing their own identity and older host parents, chapter personnel, or teachers whose authority was being questioned

At the other extreme, there are a thousand highly specific problems that may occur on occasion. For example, in one case the host father died, making the position of the hosted student within the family very difficult. In another case the host family lived in a very isolated farm with almost no outside contact. In a third case a student experienced a leg injury that restricted her movement. In still another case the host parents separated forcing a major readjustment on the part of the student. These are but a few examples of problems that have happened. There are probably as many such problems as there are placements. To compile an exhaustive list is neither possible nor productive.

Between the two extremes of very general types of problems and very specific problems, there appear to be several classes of problems that commonly recur. These are more general than the highly specific, individual difficulties mentioned above, but less pervasive than the very general categories mentioned earlier. Some of these are discussed below.

Money. Money can be a problem in two ways. Either the student can have too much money relative to what is appropriate in the hosting situation, or the student can have too little. I heard examples of the former but did not come across any. On the other hand, I frequently came across the latter problem. Several Asian students found they were often expected to pay their own way, yet had no way of doing so. These students felt hurt and frustrated, and were unable to

discuss the problem with their host families. Students frequently complained that they did not have enough money to meet the demands placed on them by their peers. In at least four cases that I know of, this led to accusations of theft, or "bludging." [Bluding means approximately the same thing as "sponging" in the U.S., that is, living gratuitously off of someone else.] These accusations were usually, but not only, made of U.S. students.

The arrival of an outsider was often difficult for the host brother or sister to handle, yet the difficulty was rarely acknowledged, and rarely was the host brother or sister able to share the limelight or the credit of a successful stay.

Host brother/sister jealousy. I often had the impression that the arrival of the AFS student created considerable tension within the host family, nearly always involving the host brother or sister. The arrival of an outsider was often difficult for the host brother or sister to handle, yet the difficulty was rarely acknowledged by family or chapter, and rarely was the host brother or sister able to share the limelight or the credit for a successful stay. The AFS students wanted to have host siblings and to be close to them, and were often hurt and bewildered by their inability to achieve good relations. The problem rarely led to a family change but often required counselling. In some cases, this problem may have passed unnoticed by the local chapter or other AFS personnel.

Parental Restrictions. For a great many students, the AFS year represented a year of adventure and freedom, a year in which they could break away from the traditional constraints of childhood. This is particularly true for Asian girls, most of whom had host families that offered them far greater personal freedom than they ever had experienced at home. However, I got the impression that a significant minority of students actually moved into a more restrictive environment than they had been used to. Some students -- particularly some (not all) from the U.S., New Zealand, and Europe who had attained considerable freedom of movement and expected to make their own decisions -- joined host families where very little autonomy was expected or permitted for adolescents. These restrictions created considerable tension in several families that I know of, and in at least one case lead to a major confrontation between a chapter chairperson and a student, in which the National Office was required to mediate.

Some students, who had attained considerable freedom of movement in their home countries and expected to make their own decisions, joined host families where very little autonomy was expected or permitted for adolescents. These restrictions created considerable tension in several families

Travel Expectations. AFS volunteers complained frequently that students came with the unrealistic expectation that they would travel extensively. The specific complaint, often expressed at chapter level, is either that students wished to use the host family as a home base from which to embark on their own travel adventures, or else that students expected the host family to entertain them and take them touring. In either case, the student was not seen to be taking the true purpose of the AFS year seriously.

(I found rather less evidence of this pattern from students. Certainly students do not wish to stay home every evening and every weekend. They like to go out either with the family, with school friends, or with AFS. Most students hope to have the opportunity to see some of Australia and to sample other lifestyles. Indeed most students experience some travel within Australia with the host family, with AFS, or both. But travel is seldom seen by students as a dominant focus. Most of the energy of most students appears to be focused on the host family, the school, and the AFS community. However, a couple of European students commented that they originally joined AFS on the understanding that the exchange was basically a travel adventure.)

Differing Attitudes to Study. The AFS exchange year involves not only living with a host family, but attending a host school. The school experience is considered an important part of the total intercultural learning experience. Hosted students are expected to experience school as any student in Australia does.

Some students perceive their primary purpose as an AFS student to be the pursuit of academic success. This pursuit may occur at the expense of everything else. On the other hand, many students were seen to be insufficiently interested in academic work.

Two problems can arise from this experience. Some students perceive that successful academic results while in Australia may assist their future academic aspirations. These students perceive their primary purpose as an AFS student to be the pursuit of academic

success. This pursuit may occur at the expense of everything else. In this case, the students show little interest in the host family, in social life, or in AFS activities. Host families and chapters then feel used. They feel that the student is too interested in studying, that study occurs at the expense of a rounded life. I came across several examples of this problem, invariably involving Asian students. In at least one case the discrepancy in attitudes led to severe family tensions, but not a change of families.

On the other hand, many students were seen to be insufficiently interested in academic work. Many perceived their school experience in Australia to be irrelevant, usually because success or failure in Australia would make no difference to academic progression within their home culture. This was true particularly of U.S. and Japanese students. Sometimes these students were tempted to make a very minimal effort at school, not to sit examinations, or to miss large segments of the school year in favour of more interesting out-of-school experiences such as travel.

Different chapters across Australia appeared to hold very different attitudes towards the importance of school. Some chapters seemed to regard school attendance and serious study as essential, and placed considerable pressure on the AFS students to conform. Other chapters had a much broader, more relaxed view of the educational process. Students were aware of these differences; those in the first type of chapter often resented what they experienced as undue or unfair pressure to perform.

Lack of Open Communication. In a broad sense, inadequate communication is the base of all adjustment problems, either as a cause or as an effect of other problems. A narrow manifestation of the lack of open communication occurs when certain subjects are taboo. The student may long to make contact or to obtain specific information but remain silent, unable to ask. Key sensitive topics like sibling rivalry or sexual relationships may never be discussed; therefore, difficulties involving these areas are never cleared. There is a burden of silence. By its very nature, this problem is likely to remain hidden, not obvious. In at least half of the cases I came to know well, this silence was a major (often the major) difficulty.

For more detailed information about the experiences of students, see Appendix One.

The non-English-speaking students had an overwhelmingly positive response to the post-arrival orientation camp. The English speaking (mainly U.S.) students, who joined the camp during the last two days, were much less positive.

Evaluations of the Orientation Camp

Students' Assessment. During the end-of-stay camp all students were asked to complete questionnaire items concerning the main, post-arrival orientation camp. They were asked to indicate, in open-ended responses, what they liked most about the orientation camp and what they did not like about it. The non-English-speaking students had an overwhelmingly positive response to the camp. The English-speaking (mainly U.S.) students, who joined the camp during the last two days, were much less positive. About a third of the English-speaking students were enthusiastic (compared to about 80% of all other students).

Students were asked how well the orientation accomplished the aims that had been identified by various stakeholding groups. Several patterns are discernable in the results. First, most students felt that the orientation camp helped "quite a lot" for most of the aims.

Students were most enthusiastic about the camp's achievement in helping them form international friendships. The camp was judged as less successful in helping them learn Australian English and culture.

Second, the orientation camp was viewed as more successful in meeting some aims than others. In general, students were most enthusiastic about the camp's achievement in helping them form international friendships. They also felt that the camp was very successful in helping them understand their responsibilities as AFS students, in introducing them to the AFS organisation in Australia and the backup it provides, and in providing them a breathing space between homes. The camp was judged as **less** successful in helping them learn Australian English and culture, gain confidence in themselves, and develop ways of handling problems in the Australian cultural context. A number of students commented that there was insufficient time to achieve some of the goals.

Third, a comparison of the responses across national groups suggests that some national groups responded much more favourably to the orientation camp than did others. In general, students from Asia responded most favourably to most items, although students from Thailand (who arrived late) were less positive about some items. Students from the U.S. were most negative. Over half of the students from the U.S. felt that the camp was not much help to them in learning about Australian culture, in learning Australian English, in gaining self-confidence, in handling problems, or in understanding their own and other cultures better. European students were also generally negative about the same items, although less so. European students felt very positively about some items, particularly that the camp did help them understand their own and other cultures better.

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All students felt that they needed more time with the U.S. students, and that more care was required in mixing the U.S. students with the rest of the APSers.

All students clearly valued the opportunity to meet other teenagers and particularly to get to know teenagers from other nations. All enjoyed the fun, the comraderie, the time to relax together. All students felt that they needed more time with the U.S. students, and that more care was required in mixing the U.S. students with the rest of the APSers.

The Asian students enjoyed the structured, organised activities; in fact, if anything they wanted more structure.

The Asian students enjoyed the care they received. They liked the games, the concerts, the organised activities. They felt ambivalent about the group discussions. They valued the information they received but found the group discussions long and boring, and felt frustrated in their struggle to understand English. The Asian students enjoyed the structured, organised activities; in fact, if anything they wanted more structure. None of the Asians asked for time to be alone, and about half of this group could find nothing they disliked about the camp.

Both U.S. and European students protested that there were too many structured activities, too many childish games. They often felt as if they were being treated like children or idiots, and resented this.

The U.S. students showed quite a different pattern, while the European students formed an intermediate group with a pattern similar to the American one. The Americans strongest disapproval was directed at the physical amenities. They disliked the food, the heat, the bugs, the shabby huts. The food in particular was disliked. (What was surprising was that the Asian students, for whom the food was most alien, rarely complained about it.) Both U.S. and European students valued the unstructured free time they had, and particularly the time alone, time for reflection. Many felt that they did not have enough time for themselves. They protested that there were too many structured activities, too many childish games. They disliked being

"lectured to" as well. They often felt as if they were being treated like children or idiots, and resented this. The U.S. students in particular felt impatient to leave. They disliked the waiting before they could meet their host families. Several students commented that they had not wanted to be there, but looking back they now recognized that they needed this camp, and wished for more time there.

> **Even those fluent in English were too hot or tired or excited to get much out of the group discussions, which they sometimes found long and boring.**

Those who were fluent in English did receive information that later helped them. However, at the time they were too hot or tired or excited to get much out of the group discussions, which they found sometimes long and boring. Some of the Asian students had great difficulty in using and understanding English and were not able to gain much from the group discussions for that reason. Yet students often expressed a wish that they had received more or better information about Australian culture, family life, school, etc. It appears that they needed this information, but did not, or could not listen when it was given.

Staff Members Assessment. This section summarizes and documents the reaction to the orientation programme at the post-arrival camp of those who were directly involved in its creation and implementation. (Both volunteers and professional employees of AFS are included in this group of respondents.) Some of these judgements concern the **worth** of the programme; these are assessments of whether the camp achieved its intended aims. Other judgements concern the **merit** of the orientation programme; these are assessments of the intrinsic excellence of the content of the programme and of how well was the camp run. Most staff members gave a detailed listing of the many aims or purposes of an orientation. (These were discussed in a previous section.) When asked how well these aims were **achieved**, most staff members had relatively little to say. The most common reaction was a blanket statement such as "reasonably well under the circumstances."

The staff members' overall judgement of the **worth** of the orientation camp was positive. However, several qualifications were offered in their assessments. The time was very short in relation to the learning that was to be accomplished. The students were very tired when they arrived. There was a huge cultural mix, with each cultural group having its own characteristics and needs. Under these circumstances it was difficult to ensure that all aims were achieved. These inherent constraints limited the potential effectiveness of the camp. While much information was given, no one can be certain how much was absorbed.

Due to the extreme time shortage resulting from their late arrivals, the students from New Zealand, Finland, French-speaking Canada, and the U.S. were seriously disadvantaged. Theri need were in some ways as great as the Asians' even though most (not all) spoke English. For this group of students it was not possible to achieve the aims effectively.

Finally, four staff members arrived at the camp late, in time to help handle the last big cohort of U.S. and New Zealand students. Many staff members commented that the latecomers among the staff seemed to have a more difficult time, and were not "in tune" with what the rest of the staff were doing. There was some conflict between the long- and short-term staff members about what learning activities would be most appropriate.

The time was short for all students, but especially for the last group of students to arrive. Their needs were in many ways as great as the Asians' even though most (not all) spoke English.

Apart from these more general comments, some staff members made detailed comments with respect to specific orientation goals.

Goal One: Breathing Space. Most students were given enough free time just to relax and rest.

Goal Two: Language Learning. While it was not possible to teach a foreign language in a week, the camp did give everyone the opportunity to gain confidence in using Australian English. The special English group for those having difficulties was a notable success.

Goal Three: Specific Culture Learning. Students were given competent instruction in such matters as bathing, bedmaking, eating, and use of toilets. but no one knows how much of this information was absorbed at the time.

Goal Four: Personal Growth. A great deal of energy was put into assisting the students, and a great deal of learning apparently occurred. The students seemed to gain self-confidence.

Goal Five: Strategies for Coping/Developing Realistic Expectations. Students were given the opportunity to correct their misconceptions, but probably many (especially the Asians) were unable to do so.

Goal Seven: Developing a Support Network. A strong bond was built up between staff and students, though this bond was weaker for late arrivals among students and staff.

Goal Eight: Meeting Other Students. A strong bond developed between students of different cultures. Again this was less true of the late arrivals.

From the comments of the camp staff members, it is clear that the orientation programme had worth not only in what it gave the students, but also in what it gave staff members. When staff members were asked about the aims of the orientation, very few mentioned staff development as an explicit aim. Yet when asked what they liked most about the camp, many responded in terms of staff development. While they did not see staff development as a formal aim, they did see it as one of the principal and most important outcomes.

Staff development includes the following specific benefits.

1) gaining background information about the students and about what they were learning at orientation camp. This was especially important for regional co-ordinators who could then follow through with the students and their host parents.

2) feeling satisfaction and personal enrichment as a result of contributing to the growth and development of the students.

3) learning about oneself and coming to terms with one's own strengths and weaknesses, values and world views. Staff members also learned to accept differences in others.

In general, the assessment of the staff members regarding the worth for themselves of the orientation camp was overwhelmingly positive. They developed new friendships, learned more about other cultures, and gained a new tolerance of different lifestyles and world views within their own culture. Many commented that they felt honoured to be a part of the camp.

Staff members were asked if they had specific comments to make about various aspects of the camp. Their responses may be taken as judgements of the **merit** of the camp, and can be categorized as follows.

Handling New Arrivals. Three features of the way in which new arrivals were received warranted comment by camp staff members.

1. The welcome of each new group was warm and caring. The greeting of new students by those who had arrived previously was good.

2. When students first arrived they were invariably bemused with fatigue. For some, the arrival routine was too exhausting -- particularly having to make their beds. Some students needed to be able just to "crash."

3. Almost immediately upon arrival the Asian students were shown how to use toilets and showers and how to make a bed. This training was regarded as important and was well done. There were, however, several problems associated with it: a) students were sometimes too tired to take it in; and b) it was hard to know how much students already knew so as not to appear patronizing. Sp,e staff members recommended that this training should be conducted by as many staff members, and perhaps also students, as possible since it served as a first supportive link between the Asians and the others.

Accommodation Arrangements. The staff commented on four features of the accommodations.

1. Accommodation for the staff was excellent. It was good that staff accommodation was separate from student accommodation, for staff members could then be part of the camp yet "escape" when they felt overwhelmed.

2. Accommodation for students was adequate. However, their rooms were hot and small with inadequate space for luggage.

3. Having mixed nationalities in each room was an excellent idea and worked well.

4. Students may need better supervision at night. Some girls were frightened; some students remained up too late. Perhaps a curfew is needed.

Food and Eating. Four points were salient in the staff's comments about camp meals.

1. The food itself was good for camp food. The food was well prepared and the kitchen staff were friendly and helpful.

2. However, the food was very bland. Some Asian students found this very hard to get used to. The adjustment to Australian food should be made more gradually, perhaps by providing more choice of condiments during the first few days.

3. The international dinner (with various dishes prepared by students from each nationality) was a resounding success. The food was delicious. The dinner gave the students a chance to show something of their culture.

4. The queuing to be served took too long, especially towards the end of the camp when the large U.S. contingent was present, and could have been organised more efficiently. Furthermore, the dining room was too crowded and far too noisy. Perhaps two sittings are necessary.

Student Workshop Sessions. Staff members made several observations about the workshops.

1. The workshops were generally well conducted. Staff enjoyed them and students appeared to learn a great deal. (As noted previously, however, it cannot be known how much of what was presented was retained.) The most effective workshops seemed to be those that required students to contribute and not just listen. Some students, particularly those with language difficulty, would not participate voluntarily.

2. Each staff member had a different group of students for each workshop session. Staff had mixed feelings about this feature of the workshops; they commented that . . .
   a) it was good that the students and staff were exposed to different personalities, different points of view;
   b) it was regrettable that staff could not get to know a group of students better so that a bond could be formed;
   c) it was unfortunate that so much time was spent organizing the groups. Those who defended the practice of organizing different groups and assigning different leaders agreed that it was preferable for students to form bonds of friendship with other students across several cultural boundaries rather than with leaders who were only from Australia.

3. Those national groups arriving later in the week either had to have sessions repeated, or else missed out on important material.

4. Sessions for particular cultural groups by native language speakers were very useful, and should have been extended to other cultural groups.

Staffing Arrangements. The following comments were made regarding the patterns of staffing.

1. Considering how heterogeneous the staff group was, it was quite amazing how well staff worked together. The heterogeneity became an asset. Young and old, male and female, people from all states, resource people from inside and outside the AFS organisation all made a valuable contribution.

2. Having two staff members per workshop almost always worked well, especially when the pair comprised an "oldie" and a younger staff member. In general, each was able to complement and support the other. Students gained a wider perspective, staff learned new skills from each other, and the burden of managing the session was shared.

3. There were too many staff members early in the week, so that staff members felt redundant. But redundancy was preferable to the problems created by having staff arrive late in the week in order to help deal with larger numbers of students. Those that arrived late felt left out.

4. Staff discussion and feedback sessions were constructive, if sometimes frustrating.

5. Almost all staff commented that "Lorna Clayton's guiding influence is imperative."

Student Entertainment. Many observations were made regarding the entertainment features of the orientation camp.

1. Staff found it difficult to distinguish between "entertainment" and "other learning experiences." Most events qualified as both; events that looked like entertainment were important vehicles for learning, while most learning experiences were also fun.

2. The trip to Sydney was an enjoyable outing but also provided lots of learning. It exposed students to the outside world and to various aspects of Australian life. The shopping expeditions also extended the students experience with language and money.

3. Games provided an excellent way of encouraging students to relax, to let off steam, to reduce their inhibitions, and to mix freely with other students.

4. The concerts were excellent. National groups performed well, students and staff learned something of other cultures, and everyone enjoyed themselves. It was good having several shorter concerts instead of one long one.

5. Staff skits worked well as learning opportunities. Students responded enthusiastically and were attentive.

6. The disco evenings were enjoyed by many students, but others were too shy to join in. A more structured activity was needed to involve all students.

7. Students needed more time for unstructured recreation, time to entertain themselves and get to know each other.

A Detailed Critique of the Worth of the Camp

Worth refers to the extrinsic, or context-determined, value of an activity or programme. Worth is a matter of usefulness or relevance within the context of practical application. It is concerned with outcomes, with assessing the extent to which the programme contributes toward achieving one or more practically useful or "worthwhile" purposes. The judgement of worth is highly variable; it depends very much on the context in which the judgement takes place. "Change the context and you change the worth." (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 43) There are several consequences of this fact. The worth of the programme must be determined by reference to the particular situation in which the knowledge or skills gained from the programme are applied. A determination of worth in one situation is not transferrable to other situations. Furthermore, a determination of worth by one group of judges is unlikely to be identical with that determined by another group of judges. Different "stakeholders"

(people with a stake of some kind in the programme or its effects) may make different and even conflicting judgements of worth, depending on what they regard as the main purpose or function of the programme in question.

There remains the problem of determining whether, and to what extent, the assumed purposes or functions have been achieved. Most outcomes are complex, and many cannot be assessed in any clear or precise way. One must depend on qualitative description, on a few indicators, and on perceived effectiveness. It is difficult to separate the effects of the orientation programme itself from the effects of related events such as ongoing counselling, other structured learning experiences, or simply the passage of time and the growing maturity of adolescents.

Nonetheless, while no clear or definitive answers can be found, it is possible to make an informed, qualitative judgement about the extent to which each purpose appears to have been achieved. While the criteria of judgement are established by the stakeholders, the final judgement about whether and to what extent each criterion has been attained belongs to me as the evaluator. In the following paragraphs I will offer and explain my judgements regarding each of the orientation goals.

Goal One: Breathing Space. Some hosted students (particularly from the U.S.) and those who developed the January orientation camp identified this an an important goal for orientation. It was mentioned occasionally by other stakeholding groups as well. Camp staff felt that most students were given enough free time just to relax and rest. However, they also felt that the time was very short for the U.S. students. Among the hosted students, the majority of the Asian and European students agreed that the orientation camp provided a breathing space between homes, though 44% of the U.S. students felt that this goal was not met. My own observation was that the camp established a very relaxed atmostphere and that large chunks of unstructured time were set aside. Those students who arrived early in the week were able to settle in and take full advantage of this free time; those arriving towards the end of the week (such as the U.S. students) found it more difficult. In general, then, the camp was successful in establishing a relaxed atmosphere and opportunities for rest and recreation, but not all students were able to take advantage of these opportunties.

Goal Two: Language Learning The goal of language learning was explicit in the title "language camp" and was cited by most stakeholding groups as an important goal for orientation (though it was only occasionally mentioned by U.S. students). The camp staff felt that the programme gave everyone the opportunity to gain confidence in using Australian English, and that the special group for those having difficulties in English was particularly successful. My own observation was that much effort was made to encourage the use of English and to provide opportunities for students to gain confidence in using it. Staff were careful to speak slowly and use simple

vocabularly and syntax. There were short mass recitation exercises each day and special attention was given to students who were experiencing marked difficulties. On the whole, the camp was successful in providing opportunties for students to gain confidence in using what English they already had. Some students were able to take the opportunties provided and showed rapid progress. Other students, especially those who were shy or reticent, did not; consequently they showed little improvement during the week. U.S. students wanted better preparation in the use of current Australian slang.

Goal Three: Specific Cultural Learning. All stakeholding groups regarded specific cultural learning as a very important goal for the orientation camp. The evidence for the success of the camp in achieving this goal is mixed. Students were given adequate instruction in such matters as bathing, bedmaking, eating, and the use of toilets, but it is hard to know how much of this information was absorbed. Roughly equal numbers of the hosted students felt that they had learned quite a lot about Australian culture as felt that they had not learned much. European and U.S. students were generally more critical than Asian students. Several students hosted in New South Wales commented that the follow-up orientation at the end of April was useful (see pages 5 and 6). By then they were much more aware of cultural problems and could check these out with each other and with AFS support staff. My conclusions are that the camp provided many opportunities for cultural learning. A great deal of effort was put into providing relevant information and into presenting this information in an interesting and meaningful way. Not all students were receptive to the information. The camp was not successful in removing all problems of cultural differences and misunderstandings (nor did anyone think it would be), but it did help. Some of the learning that occured became salient only later, as the students encountered the problems. Later follow-up orientations were sometimes able to build on and extend this cultural learning.

Several students hosted in New South Wales commented that the follow-up orientation at the end of April was useful. By then they were much more aware of cultural problems and could check these out with each other and with AFS support staff.

Goal Four: Personal Growth. Personal growth was mentioned as an orientation goal by very few stakeholding groups. It was rarely mentioned by those working at the chapter level, by host parents, or by the students themselves. However, for those involved in developing the orientation activities and for some of the camp staff, it was a very important goal indeed. A great deal of personal growth occurred for most students through their year's experience as an AFS student in Australia. This growth

cannot be attributed to any single event such as the post-arrival orientation. However, the orientation programme (both the main camp and some follow-up regional events) was an important part of the year's experience and almost certainly provided a strong base for supporting and encouraging the personal growth of the students.

Goal Five: Strategies for Coping/Developing Realistic Expectations. Helping students find strategies for coping and/or helping them develop realistic expectations was felt by all stakeholding groups to be among the more important aims of orientation. A lot of the energy of camp staff as well as several specific structured exercises were directed to this end. Nevertheless, the main post-arrival camp was not notably successful in attaining this particular goal. That is not to say that nothing was achieved; some expectations were clarified for some students, and valuable support groups were developed for dealing with later problems. However, by and large the efforts to attain this goal could not be meaningful for the students until they had a basic data base of experiences within the new culture. For this reason follow-up orientations were more appropriate places for dealing with expectations and problem solving.

Goal Six: Student Responsibilities. There were marked differences between stakeholding groups with respect to this goal. Students did not mention it at all. Among the camp staff, it was regarded as important only by regional hosting co-ordinators. On the other hand, host parents regarded the inculcation of student responsibilities as the single most important goal of orientation. The evidence for the achievement of this goal is meagre, since camp staff had little to say about it. When the students were asked in the end-of-stay questionnaire whether this goal had been met in the orientation programme, almost all of them felt that it had. A few students saw this as a negative achievement; they disliked being "preached at." In meetings and forums of host parents where this issue was raised, a common complaint was that the orientation camp did not achieve this goal. The hosts tended to believe that the students were on such a "high" during and immediately after the camp tht they found difficulty in settling down and coming to terms with what was expected of them. However, it was not possible to explore systematically the feelings of host parents on this issue. I observed that some information about student responsibilities was provided at the orientation camp. The students generally felt that this was sufficient. But at least some host parents and chapter volunteers would like to see more emphasis on the training of students regarding their responsibilities.

By and large, the efforts to help students develop strategies for coping and expectations that were realistic could not be meaningful for the students until they had a basic data base of experiences within the new culture. Follow-up orientations were more appropriate places for dealing with these issues.

Goal Seven: Developing a Support Network. Neither students nor host parents made much mention of the goal of developing a support network. However, it was seen to be an important goal of orientation by other stakeholding groups. Among directors and regional chairpersons this was the single most frequently mentioned goal. The orientation, including both the main orientation camp and follow-up regional orientations, was highly successful in meeting the goal of establishing the basis for continuing support throughout the year.

Goal Eight: Meeting Other Students. Among the Asian and European students the single most frequently mentioned goal of orientation was meeting other students. It was also seen to be important by U.S. students and by orientation camp staff. On the other hand, this goal was never mentioned by host parents or area co-ordinators. The goal of meeting peers was clearly achieved for all but a few students. My observation of the main orientation camp was that a kind of magic prevailed. That magic is well expressed in the AFS slogan, "Walk Together, Talk Together." It pervaded the whole camp throughout all the varied activities. Students from many cultures walked together, talked together, played together, sang together, worked together, laughed together, and cried together. For many students the rest of the year did not live up to this ideal. But though they might never again reach it, many students (and staff) caught a vision of the AFS ideal, one that they certainly carried all year, and carried home again to their home cultures. Students were asked what they liked most about the camp. The most common responses talked about getting to know people from other cultures, breaking down communication and cultural boundaries, sharing together in a common task, forming lasting international friendships. While this goal was achieved for almost all the students, the U.S. students were disadvantaged due to their late arrival at the orientation camp.

My observation of the main orientation camp was that a kind of magic prevailed. That magic is well expressed in the AFS slogan, "Walk Together, Talk Together."

Goal Nine: General Cultural Learning. This goal was not very salient to any stakeholding group. It very well may have been seen as a higher order goal, or one beyond the reach of the oreintation camp. But John Streckfuss (National Director of AFS/Australia) mentioned general cultural learning as a key aim of orientation: "to develop an understanding of other cultures (not just Australian) -- to get a sense of the variety and sameness of cultures." This goal was not achieved as a direct result of the formal orientation sessions. It was achieved as an ongoing process throughout the year. However, a great deal of general cultural learning did occur at the main orientation camp due to the friendly contact among students from a wide variety of cultures. This experience provided a strong base for continued learning.

Goal Ten: Staff Development. Staff development was rarely mentioned by any stakeholding group, but when it was, it was done almost apologetically as an extra luxury. One camp staffer commented, "Staff members automatically gain, but that is not the **reason** for the camp. We want to give the students as much as we can." Had I not been told this so explicitly, I would have believed otherwise. Those who organised the camp, as well as the camp staff themselves, **acted** as though staff development was a major goal of the orientation camp. Thus AFS Australia took pains to bring in volunteers from all regions of Australia, prefering key people who were likely to play a major ongoing role in student matters. Camp staff devoted considerable energy during the camp to their own and each other's development. The implicit assumption (rarely stated) seemed to be that the student exchange situation was a two-way interaction. The development of personal growth and cultural learning on the part of the students depended at least partly on the development of personal and cultural sensitivity by those who were guiding them.

Although the goal of staff development is seldom openly acknowledged, it in fact represents one of the most important and worthwhile outcomes of the orientation camp. The knowledge gained from the camp experience has a strong multiplier effect in terms of transfer of cultural awareness throughout Australian communities.

Although the goal of staff development is seldom acknowledged, it in fact represents one of the most important and worthwhile outcomes of the orientation camp.

A General Assessment of the Worth of the Programme

It should be clear by now that there cannot be any simple answer to the question, "Does the orientation programme for Year Programme

students in Australian have worth?" The answer is yes for **some** parts of the programme in meeting **some** of the goals assessed by **some** stakeholder groups as important, and benefiting **some** students. For other parts, goals, stakeholder groups, and students, the answer is probably no.

The part of the overall, year-long orientation programme that probably has greatest worth (practical usefulness) is the main national orientation camp; but not all of it or for all goals or all students. The goals that seem to be best achieved are those that relate to developing support networks, establishing international friendships, and developing staff competencies. Other goals like personal growth, specific culture learning, and general cultural learning are achieved as a result of the whole year's experience. For goals such as these, it is not possible to isolate the effect of any single event. It does seem possible to say, however, that information relating to specific Australian cultural rules and values as well as to realistic expectations and practical coping strategies is not meaningful to students until they have some clearly perceived context or data base as a foundation for understanding. Such a foundation can be acquired only by living for a period of time in the new culture. It is probably best to touch on these issues at the inital camp, but explore them fully at later (regional) orientations.

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Most stakeholding groups appear to be well pleased with the outcomes of the orientation. That is, at least some of the goals expressed by each stakeholding group appear to be achieved. The least satisfied group appears to be the host parents. However, there is insufficient systematic data to be sure about the opinions of hosts. Impressionistic observation suggests that host parents do not believe that students are made sufficiently aware of their responsibilities. This goal was the one most frequently mentioned by this group, though seldom mentioned by other stakeholding groups. This is probably the best example of the discrepancy in values and priorities among the stakeholding groups, despite the fact that all of these groups presumably are dedicated to the overall ideals of the APS movement.

The Asian students certainly benefitted the most; this is not surprising given that the orientation was orginally designed with them in mind. The English-speaking students (mainly those from the U.S.) benefitted least.

Finally, not all students or student groups benefitted equally from the orientation. The Asian students certainly benefitted the most; this is not surprising given that the orientation was orginally designed with them in mind. The English-speaking students (mainly U.S.) benefitted least, an outcome that can be traced to two main factors.

1) The English-speaking students had very little time at the initial camp. Furthermore, they came as "the outsiders" into the camp's well integrated social order. In addition, there were too many U.S. students to allow their quick or easy integration.

2) The U.S. students preferred training procedures different from those being used with the other students. They disliked being "lectured to" but also the "childish" games and structured activities. Some were not receptive to staff initiatives.

Despite these problems, most U.S. students derived some benefits from the camp. Chief of these was the support network that they were able to begin building on the basis of personal contacts.

After all this hedging, let's end on a positive note. **Yes, the orientation programme in Australia is enormously worthwhile.** It achieves, or contributes to the achievement of, a wide range of goals. It meets some objectives of most stakeholder groups, and it benefits, to a greater or lesser degree, virtually all students.

Conclusions

I am writing this final section almost exactly two years after receiving my initial briefings from John Streckfuss and Neal Grove. Much has happened in that time. I observed the immediate post-arrival orientation camp for incoming students in January 1983. I met the professional and volunteer staff who make AFS work. I met many students at the camp and followed their adventures throughout the year. I remained in contact with volunteer AFS staff across the country -- by letter, phone, and at national forums and workshops. I observed the final end-of-stay camp for the 1983 students just prior to their departure.

Over the past year I have collated enormous amounts of data -- qualitative and quantitative -- drawn from many sources across Australia. This mass of information has been sorted, analyzed, and presented here. The details now have been spelled out. There remains the taks of setting out the broad conclusions that I have reached. They are **my** conclusions. I hope enough material has been provided that others may draw their own.

1) Year Programme students coming into Australia through AFS receive a great deal of attention and care. Much thought goes into creating for them an experience that is rich and supportive. Each student receives personalised and individual attention that takes into account his or her cultural perspective and personal needs.

2) The initial arrival orientation symbolizes the magic of AFS. Through some ten days of intensive living together, Australian volunteers of all backgrounds, and students from all over the world, learn to share and communicate and value each other in a spirit of caring and trust such as I have never seen before.

3) AFS/Australia does not have a set of specific objectives for orientation. Rather, each stakeholding group carries a set of broad and largely implicit expectations about the purposes of orientation. The expectations held by different stakeholding groups overlap considerably, but contain important differences and a few conflicts in emphasis.

4) By and large, the immediate post-arrival orientation camp does achieve some (but not all) the purposes expected of it by each stakeholding group. The arrival orientation is therefore judged to have worth by all the principle stakeholding groups, though the basis or reason for so judging differs somewhat for each stakeholding group.

5) Australians are learning as much, if not more, from the exchange as are the AFS students. This aspect is extremely important and should not be discounted. Australians know little of other cultures. AFS volunteers try very hard to give students the personalised care they need and to understand the cultural orientation the students bring with them. But few volunteers have any detailed knowledge of another culture. There are few resources available for them to turn to. Much of what they have learned has been gained from AFS workshops and directly from their experience with the students themselves. The orientation camp itself is an excellent basis for volunteer development.

6) There is generally **not** an adequate follow-up to the immediate post-arrival orientation camp. There is ongoing support and counselling provided for students through the chapter. This is not enough. The orientation tries to provide the students with the information they need about Australian families and schools and about the culture as a whole. It tries to develop the students' self-confidence, and to help students develop their own coping strategies. It tries to do too much. Much information is relevant and important, but it is not digested. The lessons do not become meaningful to students until they have a basis of experience to work on. They need those workshops, those resources, that support, about two months later, once the honeymoon period is over and they are seriously coming to grips with the problems of adjusting to a new culture.

7) Students need, and obtain, good orientation. Host families also need some orientation. Some families receive this; most do not.

Host families need culture-specific information. They need the opportunity to discuss common problems of hosting. They need support in working through these problems. Some host family orientation and support occurs informally at the chapter level. Much more could be provided at a regional event such as the Country Weekend in New South Wales, which brings host families and students together from across the state, together with resource people from the state and national levels.

8) Finally, I would like to stress that what is appropriate in one context is not necessarily appropriate in another. What works in New South Wales probably would not work in South Australia or West Australia. What works in Australia probably would not work in Japan. Any orientation is a preparation for life in a particular cultural setting. The structure and dynamics of the orientation necessarily must be shaped in part by that specific cultural context. The Australian culture in general is characterised by an open, casual lifestyle. It is appropriate therefore that an Australian orientation should also have these characteristics. Such a programme, if transplanted to a different kind of culture, would not prepare hosted students for life and work in that new culture.

Finally, I would like to bring my report to a close by saying that a project such as this tends to focus on the problems of the program being evaluated, rather than on its strengths. So I would like to emphasize that, over and over again, hosted students cited the post-arrival orientation camp as one of the highlights of their year in Australia . . . and sometimes of their lives.

A F T E R W O R D S

AUSTRALIA'S ORIENTATION AND THE MONTREAL RECOMMENDATIONS

by Mary Ann Zaremba
Director of Program Support
AFS International

Dr. Noesjirwan already had completed the data-gathering phase of her study when 14 experienced AFS staff members and volunteers met in Canada during February 1984 to participate in the Workshop on Intercultural Learning Content and Quality Standards, also known as the "Montreal Workshop." The primary objective of the Workshop was to identify learning objectives for participants in AFS programs. In the course of the discussions, current orientation practices were critically examined within the frameworks of the best available knowledge and experience on the one hand, and of the practical limitations of financial and personnel resources on the other. From this critical analysis emerged a set of practical recommendations, the implementation of which should go a long way towards helping participants to attain the learning objectives that were identified by the group.*

Anyone familiar with the 11 Montreal Workshop Recommendations -- no longer precisely "recommendations" due to their explicit approval by the Trustees and the World Congress -- will recognize that the approach of AFS/Australia to orienting hosted students will be undergoing a change. As in the case of most other AFS countries, the during-the-sojourn orientation for Year Program participants in Australia eventually will be delayed by three to five weeks as well as decentralized into a set of smaller regional events offered entirely by volunteers. (Australia's orientation already is run by volunteers, but many more will have to become active in order to successfully decentralize.)

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* The **Reports from the Workshop on Intercultural Learning Content and Quality Standards** are available from AFS national offices and from my office in New York. The entire set of learning objectives as well as key excerpts from the recommendations have been published in the **AFS Orientation Handbook: Volume V** (1985), pp. 4-11.

Allow me to point out that Dr. Noesjirwan's report, in several respects, documents and underscores the need to make the change to delayed and decentralized orientations. You will recall that she made these points:

- Due to the rigors of air travel, many students had difficulty in getting themselves physically able to participate in the activities of the immediate post-arrival camp. Allowances had to be made for the fact that their receptiveness was very low for a day or two.

- The staff at the immediate post-arrival orientation camp encountered problems due to the late arrivals of several contingents. Furthermore, the large size of one of those contingents made its members' integration into the activities and spirit of the camp difficult.

- Students at the immediate post-arrival camp found that much of the information presented to them was more or less incomprehensible because their personal experience never had included the kinds of situations being described. Specific cultural learning occurred much more efficiently and effectively in those cases when it was presented after the students had lived in the host community for a while.

- Likewise, in spite of the energy put into helping the students develop useful strategies for coping as well as realistic expectations, these efforts could not be meaningful for the students "until they had a basic data base of experiences within the new culture."

All these difficulties are likely to be ameliorated, if not eliminated entirely, by the practice of delaying and decentralizing post-arrival orientations. During the two years that have passed since the Montreal Workshop Recommendations were distributed, AFS national units that changed their orientations for Year Program students to delayed and decentralized programs have realized a number of benefits:

- Students approached the formal orientation sessions with greater receptiveness.

- Interaction among students, and between students and orientation staff, improved because of the smaller group setting.

- Students were able to make extensive use of their own personal experiences in the host country as a sound basis for intercultural learning during formal and informal orientation sessions.

- Students were encouraged to communicate among themselves using the language of the host country.

- Orientation staff were better able to identify students with difficulties in learning the language of the host country due to the fact that all students already had been attempting to learn it.

• Perhaps most significant and encouraging, those national units that adopted the Montreal Workshop Recommendations now report immediate and significant declines in the rate at which students change host families due to maladjustment.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the hosted students are not the only group that is predicted to benefit from the recommended change in time and place of the major post-arrival orientation. Volunteers also benefit as a result of playing an expanded role in the orientation process. The fifth conclusion offered by Dr. Noesjirwan (on page 37) helps to emphasize this point.

> Australians are learning as much, if not more, from the exchange as are the multinational students. Australians know little of other cultures. There are few resources available for them. Much of what they have learned has been gained from AFS workshops and directly from their experience with the students themselves. The orientation camp itself is an excellent basis for volunteer development.

Delaying and decentralizing the post-arrival orientations in Australia, and in all other AFS countries, ultimately will provide many more volunteers with the opportunity to learn as least as much as the exchange students. In those countries where orientation activities have been decentralized in accordance with the Montreal Workshop Recommendations, the local and regional volunteer structures have been strengthened by taking over the hands-on responsibility for this key feature of AFS programs. Having such a major responsibility has increased the volunteers' motivation for active involvement and has deepened their practical appreciation of the meaning of intercultural learning.

It is important to keep in mind that the Montreal Workshop Recommendations did **not** rule out the use of post-arrival orientations that are centralized and occur immediately upon the arrival of the hosted participants. Such orientations -- sometimes referred to as "survival skill training" because they focus on health and safety in the host country -- are viewed as not only acceptable but also necessary. However, they are to be **brief** and confined to **basic** information. In most cases, survival skill training can be accomplished in two or three hours. Keeping in mind the difficulties that may attend onward travel arrangements, hosted students ideally should not be kept at a central location for more than two nights.

Testimony from AFS national units where delayed and decentralized orientations have been tried has been overwhelmingly favorable. By carefully documenting an orientation program carried out in the traditional manner, Dr. Noesjirwan has helped all of us to attain a better appreciation of the need for the recommendations that emerged from the Montreal Workshop and were adopted by the Trustees as well as the World Congress participants during 1984.

HOW NATIONAL UNITS CAN MAKE USE OF THIS REPORT

by Dr. Neal Grove
Director of Research
AFS International

No doubt you are impressed, as I have been, with the dedication and perseverance that was necessary for Dr. Noesjirwan to complete the Orientation Evaluation Project and to produce her thoughtful and thorough final report of some 400 pages. Knowing that AFS staff and volunteers are extremely busy, Dr. Bettina Hansel summarized and edited that final report in order to create the document you are now reading. And because even this document is long and detailed, I am going to take the liberty of directing your attention to some of the ways in which we can benefit from Dr. Noesjirwan's work.

As Dr. Noesjirwan said in her eighth conclusion, what is appropriate in one context is not necessarily appropriate in another. You may agree wholeheartedly with that observation, yet view her report as a valuable tool to stimulate your own thoughtful assessment of the orientation programs for hosted participants in your own country. Surely, as you were reading the preceding pages, you were mentally comparing and contrasting the during-the-sojourn orientation offered by your national unit with that provided by Australia in 1983. I urge you not to allow your interest to remain purely mental, but to join others in your national unit in using the Australian experience as a mirror with which to reflect upon your own orientations, and in applying to that task the concepts and procedures employed by Dr. Noesjirwan.

In order to focus precisely on what Dr. Noesjirwan actually did in Australia, I need to introduce the terms "merit" and "worth" as they apply to the evaluation of any educational program. A useful summary of the meaning of these two terms is found on the last page of this document. If you take two or three minutes to peruse that summary, you probably will come away with the impression that "merit" describes the process of program evaluation more or less as you always understood it, whereas "worth" describes an evaluation process that is rather unfamiliar. To ask about the merit of an educational program is to ask, **"Are we doing things right?"** in the sense of whether the work of delivering the program is being carried out efficiently. To ask about the worth of an educational program, however, it to ask, **"Are we doing the right things?"** in the sense of whether the program actually is delivering learning content that is effective for everyone who has a stake in it. This latter question goes to the heart of what the program is all about and therefore is the most basic question that can be asked about it.

My charge to Dr. Noesjirwan was that she investigate **both** the merit and the worth of AFS/Australia's orientation program for hosted students. Her 400-page report discusses both merit and worth. But because worth is an evaluation concept that is relatively unfamiliar yet of basic importance, the portions of her report that we have excerpted in this Research Report are those that pertain most directly to worth. Our hope is that these excerpts from her report will be the most useful to you as you plan to carry out your own evaluation of the worth of your national unit's orientation program for hosted participants (and/or for participants you send abroad).

I urge you to think seriously about carrying out an evaluation of the worth of one or more of your orientation programs. Stated with little elaboration, the steps you would need to take are these:

1. Identify an "outsider" to carry out the evaluation. The outsider may be a person who has a basic understanding of exchange programs and of intercultural learning, but (as suggested by the term "outsider") should be a person with no direct ties to AFS or to the program to be evaluated. The objective in selecting an outsider is to involve a person who brings no "institutional biases" to the task, one who can view the program with "fresh eyes." In Australia's project, Dr. Jennifer Noesjirwan was that person.

2. Determine the key "stakeholding" groups associated with the orientation program to be evaluated. A stakeholder is **anyone** who has a personal "stake" of any kind in the program. Dr. Noesjirwan discusses the identities of the stakeholders in Australia's orientation for hosted students in the second paragraph of her introduction, on page 1.

3. Arrange for the outside evaluator to be a participant/observer in the orientation program being evaluated, and direct him or her to write a thoroughly detailed account of that program. The material found from the bottom of page 1 through page 11 is Dr. Noesjirwan's description of Australia's orientation program for hosted students.

4. Arrange for the outside evaluator to interview representatives from all stakeholding groups, and to identify thereby the predominant views and concerns of each group. As many stakeholders as possible from each group should be interviewed; this task is likely to be time-consuming and to require some travel. Dr. Noesjirwan's basic report of the views and concerns of Australia's stakeholders begins at the bottom of page 11 and continues through the middle of page 14; more specific information about the views and concerns of the hosted students and orientation staff members is found on pages 22 through 29.

5. Ask the outside evaluator to identify the points of conflict in the views and concerns expressed by the various stakeholding groups. Keep in mind that a consensus about worth is impossible to attain because

the various types of stakeholders have widely varying needs in their life and work. The evaluator should document the points of conflict, as Dr. Noesjirwan has from the middle of page 14 to the top of page 16.

6. Arrange for the outside evaluator to find out as much as possible about the actual experiences of the hosted students in their respective homes, schools, and communities. This procedure is another way of determining whether the orientation program is effective, that is, whether it is "doing the right things." These findings also must be documented, as Dr. Noesjirwan has on pages 16 through 21.

7. Ask the outside evaluator to analyze all the information at hand carefully, taking special note of the problems that have come to light through observation of the orientation program, documentation of the actual experiences of the hosted students, and expression of concerns by the various stakeholding groups. This analysis should lead to a detailed critique of the program that considers possible remedies for the problems and concerns, and that might look more or less similar to the one presented by Dr. Noesjirwan on pages 29 through 34.

8. Finally, ask the outside evaluator to present a general assessment of the worth of the program, advocating changes that, if made, would deal with as many of the problems and concerns as possible. The general assessment of Dr. Noesjirwan begins at the bottom of page 34 and continues to the end of her report.

These procedures for carrying out an evaluation of worth are somewhat simplified in keeping with the limited resources available to most AFS national units. If you are interested in seeing a similar but more thorough approach to the evaluation of the worth of a program of intercultural education, write to me asking for Ronald Stutzman's **Guide to On-Site Evaluation of Undergraduate Study-Abroad Programs**, Goshen College (Goshen, Indiana, 1985).

The approach to educational program evaluation that is advocated throughout this Research Report as well as in the publication by Stutzman mentioned in the preceding paragraph is that developed by Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln in **Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches**, Jossey-Bassy (San Francisco, California, 1981).

THE INTERDEPENDENT CONCEPTS OF "MERIT" AND "WORTH" IN A F S PROGRAM EVALUATION

Any educational program, including one directed toward intercultural learning, should be evaluated by determining its worth as well as its merit. Merit and worth are evaluation concepts that are different though interrelated.

M E R I T -- Intrinsic excellence of operations

"Merit" concerns the degree to which the various procedures and operations involved in the delivery of the program are carried out competently, completely, consistently, in a timely manner, and so forth.

High merit does not necessarily imply high worth -- program content of no practical value to anyone could be delivered in a highly competent manner.

Merit involves issues of primary interest to program administrators. Merit is OBJECTIVE. Examples --

1. Were orientation materials attractively printed, well written, and congruent with up-to-date theory and research findings?
2. Were all student-host placements made on time?
3. Is this program staying within the budget?

Merit is evaluated by determining the degree to which the program's operations and procedures conform to widely agreed upon standards of excellence, whether set by administrators, outside experts, or others.

Merit is relatively stable because it is context-free; a consensus about merit is possible to attain so long as true agreement exists about standards of excellence.

Administrators evaluate merit: 1) agree upon standards of excellence; 2) examine procedures & operations to determine conformity to standards; 3) determine how to correct seriously substandard procedures & operations. Administrators may delegate these tasks to outsiders.

Administrators are primarily responsible for the determination of merit, but they also are stakeholders.

W O R T H -- Practical usefulness to "stakeholders"

"Worth" concerns the degree to which the actual content of the program is experienced by participants and all others having a personal "stake" in the outcome of the program as being beneficial to them in a practical way.

High worth does not necessarily imply high merit -- a program could yield much learning of use to participants **in spite of** being incompetently delivered.

Worth involves issues of primary interest to program participants. Worth is SUBJECTIVE. Examples --

1. Did orientation materials enable me to better understand, adapt to, and benefit from my host family, school, and community?
2. Did my placement yield satisfaction and learning?
3. Did this program give me what I thought I paid for?

Worth is evaluated by determining the degree to which all participants and other stakeholders have found the program to have a beneficial impact or outcome in their actual life and work, both during and after the program.

Worth is highly variable because it is context-dependent; a consensus about worth is impossible to attain because people have widely varying needs in their life and work.

Outsiders evalute worth: 1) identify all stakeholders; 2) interview/observe representative sample; 3) identify points of conflict in stakeholders' views and concerns; 4) devise possible remedies for concerns; 5) present all views to administrators, advocating preferred remedies.

Stakeholders may be the sole determiners of a program's worth; some may also have valid views about its merit.